

aisle, to help craft a bipartisan bill that I believe all of us can enthusiastically support. I certainly want to also commend President Bush for his efforts in this area.

He has brought the issue of education reform to the forefront through the depth of his commitment to improving America's schools. I have had the honor to speak with the President regarding this issue on a number of occasions now. Each time, he has demonstrated to me his genuine, heart-felt belief in the importance of closing the achievement gap in America's education system.

The bill we are about to consider is numbered H.R. 1 for a reason. It is considered by the administration and appropriately by Members of this House as the top priority for our Nation. There is no more important challenge before our Nation than ensuring that the next generation of schoolchildren is fully equipped with the skills and knowledge that they will need to succeed in work and life. Books and chalk boards, good teachers, and a safe learning environment, these are the ingredients to a better future.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1 consolidates education programs. It increases flexibility for local schools and, most importantly, and a corner stone of the President's plan, it requires accountability through annual testing. It treats literacy as a new civil right by proposing an investment of \$5 billion in literacy programs to guarantee every student can read by grade 3.

An area I have particular interest in is preschool education, and the Early Reading First program proposed by H.R. 1 will help to advance the debate in this area. Too many children, because they come from broken families and shattered communities, first arrive at the schoolhouse already at a tremendous disadvantage. Quality pre-K programs, such as those envisioned in Early Reading First, can do much to ensure that these kids will not have to spend their entire elementary years merely trying to catch up.

I look forward to these and other considerations of the provisions in the bill, and I certainly join with the chairman of the committee and with other Members of the House in fully supporting the President's education plan so that we leave no child behind.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS).

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank my colleagues as well, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the chair of the committee, and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), our ranking member.

As a freshman Member of Congress, it has been an exciting time for me and a challenge to serve on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, working to draft a bipartisan education bill which truly will help students in California and throughout

the country. I have been touring the schools in my district to find out exactly what our teachers, administrators, parents and students really need in terms of help from the Federal Government. I think the bill that was reported out of our Committee on Education and the Workforce makes an excellent start towards helping our students achieve success. I am pleased with the increased funding levels of title I, and the increase targeting of funds to low-income and at-risk students. I am also extremely happy with what was not in the bill, and that is, private vouchers.

Although I am happy with the bill, I do have some concerns. I had hoped that the Republican leadership would have allowed Democrats the opportunity to improve the bill through amendments. I had hoped that school construction, an amendment that was offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) would have had some consideration today. Likewise, I also wanted to offer an amendment to allow community learning centers to use their funds to implement programs which would help immigrant students with language and life skills. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to offer these amendments.

I have several concerns with portions of the bill dealing with bilingual and immigrant education. I believe we must dramatically increase funding for bilingual and migrant education in order to meet the needs of States which are experiencing a large influx of immigrant and bilingual students. Also, the bill recommends that students be moved out of bilingual classrooms and into English-only programs within a matter of 3 years. I believe this provision is overly restrictive and has no basis in academic research.

I am also unhappy that the bill requires school districts to try and receive a parent's permission before putting a child into a bilingual education program. Requiring parents to "opt-in" in order to place their children in bilingual education is truly unfair.

Mr. Chairman, I think we have a very good education bill before us, given that we did work in a bipartisan effort. I know that some of my Republican colleagues will be offering amendments to add private school vouchers and to also continue the block grant effort. I would urge my colleagues to oppose those amendments and to stay with the base of the bill.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER), a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

I am a cosponsor of H.R. 1, and the reason I am is because the President proposed an ambitious plan, a good plan, called No Child Left Behind. This plan was adopted in terms of its vision by the Congress and translated into a

bill titled H.R. 1, and that is the version of which I became a cosponsor.

This is an ambitious plan, and it is one that is balanced in its approach to education reform. This is a topic, Mr. Chairman, I take quite personally. I have 5 children; 3 of them have been in school, in public school in Colorado for about 3 hours, and it is them and their peers and children just like them that I think ought to be our primary vision and motivation in considering education issues in this bill in particular. What the President has proposed was a vision for education that spoke directly to them.

Key provisions of the bill, however, have been ripped out of the President's plan by the Committee on Education and the Workforce here in the House and elsewhere. For example, on the policy page of the President's plan, the President outlined the following: "If schools fail to make adequate yearly progress for 3 consecutive years, disadvantaged students may use title I funds to transfer to a higher performing public or private school." This provision, the core provision of the President's plan, has been taken out of his proposal.

The President goes on with respect to flexibility: "Under this program, charter States and districts would be freed from categorical program requirements in return for submitting a 5-year performance agreement to the Secretary of Education." This provision has been stripped from the bill.

Fortunately, today here on the floor, there are a number of amendments that were made in order that allow the President's vision to be restored to, in fact, secure for the President a victory out of the jaws of what appeared to be imminent defeat. We will have, for example, an opportunity to vote on a limited Straight A's provision which allows flexibility to seven States. This is a watered-down provision from what the President proposed, but important, nonetheless, for us to adopt.

Our failure to adopt these important amendments would be a betrayal to our President and I am hopeful, Mr. Chairman, that we will honor the President's vision to leave no child behind by restoring his bill here on the House Floor.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), a member of the committee.

(Mrs. DAVIS of California asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the leadership on both sides, because they have worked diligently to create a document that would focus Federal funds on those students who are most needy.

While each of us would like to see changes in language or additions to the program, it is important to respect the restraints of these compromises and reject attempts to commit major surgery that would kill the patient. Studies